

RWANDA/BURUNDI REGIONAL REFUGEE CONFERENCE

RELEASED IN FULL

- o **Evolution of the Conference:** The idea for the conference stemmed from two resolutions--one passed at the OAU Summit in June and the other one passed at UNGA in September last year. AF A/S Moose and the government of Burundi also suggested such a conference.
- o **Purpose of Conference:** The USG attached great importance to the Rwanda/Burundi Regional Refugee Conference which was held from February 15-17. We saw this as an important opportunity to focus on the diplomatic and practical steps needed to permit large-scale repatriation of Rwandan and Burundi refugees as well as an opportunity for regional players to discuss the inescapable political context.
- o **Specific Desired Outcomes:** We wanted to see concrete, pragmatic plans adopted for addressing sticky issues such as camp security, land tenure questions, confidence-building mechanisms, and indemnification.
- o The USG delegation was headed by PRM A/S Phyllis Oakley. Joining her was Ambassador Friedman, Special Coordinator for Rwanda; Ambassador Rawson, our Ambassador to Rwanda; Ambassador Krueger, our Ambassador to Burundi; and Myron Golden, USAID Mission Director for Rwanda/Burundi.
- o The USG provided UNHCR with \$50,000 toward the cost of the conference which was budgeted at \$288,000. The Belgian, Canadian, and Dutch governments, among others, also contributed.
- o By all accounts, the conference was positive. There was agreement by the participants on a concrete plan of action.
- o This plan outlines the next steps to be taken by the countries of origin, the countries of asylum, and international community in order to promote and facilitate the ultimate objective of voluntary refugee repatriation.
- o The United States delegation was satisfied that the conference took place and finds that the plan of action covers most salient points. While recognizing that much remains to be done, we believe that the open and frank exchanges which took place during the conference helped to focus the attention of the participants on the need to move forward on implementing the elements of the plan of action.

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